

## Fatimah: Adapt to changing trends to be competitive

**KUCHING:** Welfare, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah wants administrators, lecturers and students of institutions of higher learning in the country to adapt themselves to changing trends to remain relevant and competitive.

She said to do that they must fully understand the situations they were in, and from there strategise to ensure their roles and that of their institutions were adequately translated into meaningful and relevant plans of action.

She said they must accept the fact that they were competing not only with home-grown institutions but also with foreign ones that had found places in the hearts of Malaysians.

Asking local institutions to innovate to be attractive, she said among areas they should look at were alternative routes and opportunities for higher studies as well as diverse values and conceptions about what constituted quality and quality assurance processes.

She noted that all these had, to a certain extent, changed the academic and organisational nature of institutions as well as the demographic character of the students.

Fatimah stressed that issues about the quality of graduates — their knowledge, skills attitudes, values and their worldviews — were relevant in determining graduates' marketability and employability, and definitely resulting also in the nature of the global competition the local graduates would have to face in the job market.

She said similarly, issues concerning the overall academic standards of the teaching and research staff, the courses institutions were offering and the roles of universities in the socio-cultural development of the country's multi-racial society, were equally of great importance in the national development agendas.

"These are real challenges that we must all address with vision, vigour and commitment," she said at the 1Malaysia Book Voucher handing over ceremony at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday.

Fatimah said it was important for all public universities to know that their role was to educate highly relevant graduates to meet the needs of the country. She said as such, all institutions of higher learning in the country, including Unimas, must respond accordingly.